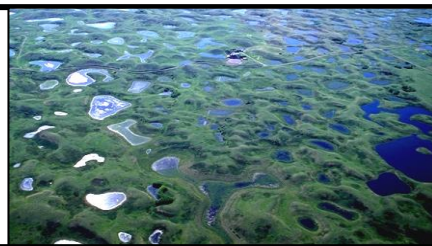
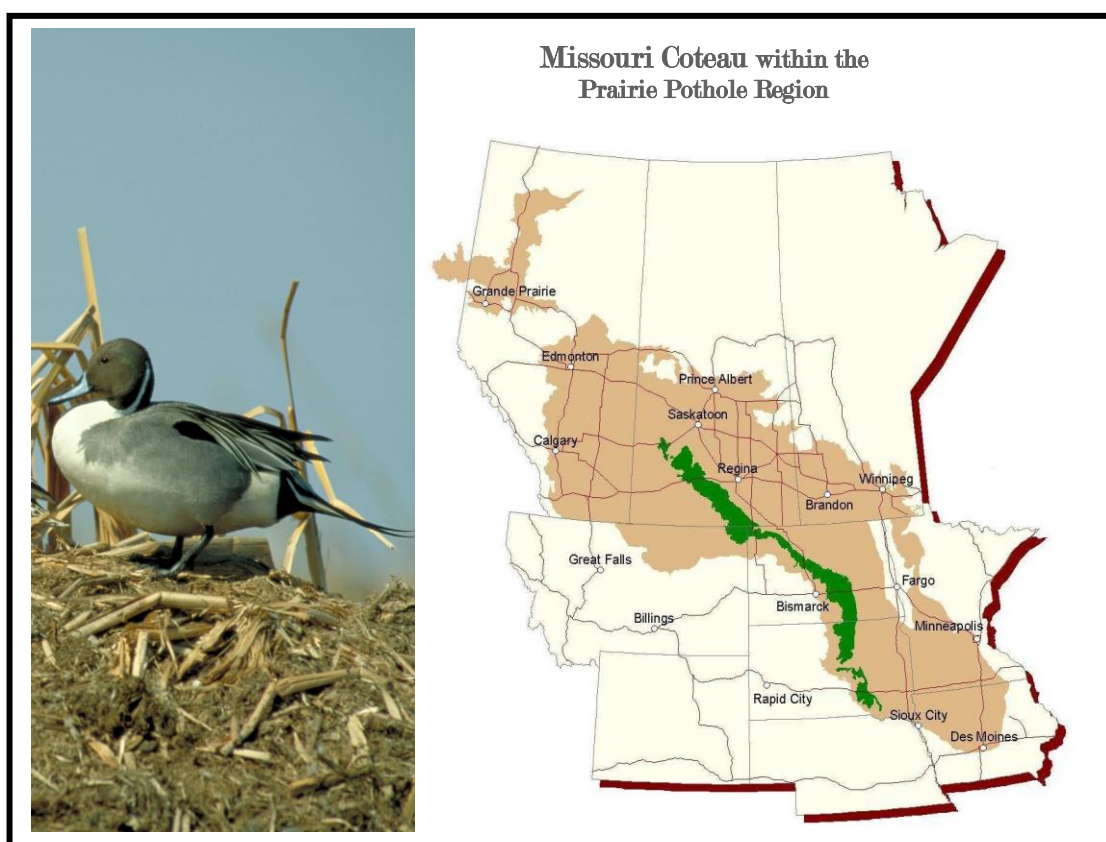


Final Report: April 2005 – March 2006



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries



submitted by:
Ducks Unlimited Canada
and

Ducks Unlimited Inc.

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Funding and Partnerships:






During 2005 the Missouri Coteau remained one of the critical areas of focus for Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). Generous program funding from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has allowed the Coteau Legacy program to advance towards its conservation goals for this critical waterfowl landscape. LDWF funds were leveraged 7 times through strong ongoing relationships between various conservation partners in Canada and the United States made possible through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP). State agency and DU Inc. funds in conjunction with U.S. Federal funding through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) has allowed DUC's Saskatchewan Operations to accelerate its efforts to conserve and restore

valuable acres of wetland and upland habitat. NAWCA provides matching funds for habitat conservation on Crown and private lands alike, and promotes extension activities that foster good land stewardship ethics to private landowners. The securement, enhancement and technical assistance components of program delivery all play an integral part in long-term waterfowl population recovery.

This report highlights DUC's program and partnership successes within the Missouri Coteau during the period April 1, 2005 through to March 31, 2006. DUC wishes to acknowledge the continued generous financial support of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, during this, the third year of program funding.

Missouri Coteau – FY 2006

	REVENUE	US \$	Cdn \$	 
	LDWF	230,000	276,000	
	DU Inc.	230,000	276,000	
	NAWCA	460,000	552,000	
	Other Contributions	766,907	920,288	
	Totals	1,686,907	2,024,288	
*Conversion Rate (US\$ X 1.2 = \$ Cdn)				

Target Area: Missouri Coteau “Hills of the Prairie”



Coteau Diversity

At the heart of the Prairie Pothole Region is the Missouri Coteau or “hills of the prairie”. The Missouri Coteau is a 25,700 square mile band of recessional moraine, 10 to 50 miles wide, which stretches from Saskatchewan southeasterly into North and South Dakota. The Missouri Coteau is a broken escarpment characterized by gently rolling to rugged hills that generate high wetland densities. During wet years these highly productive prairie wetlands in concert with an abundance of native grassland provide some of the very best waterfowl habitat in North America. The Missouri Coteau is a last vestige of prairie grasslands and pothole wetlands that once dominated the Prairie Region.

Waterfowl values of the Coteau have long been recognized. High densities of waterfowl (Fig. 1) are drawn to these breeding grounds annually. Bill Leitch, one of DUC’s first biologists referred to the Coteau as “highly desirable duck breeding habitat” (Leitch 1952). During wet years this landscape is critically important to the recovery of waterfowl populations. The frequency of drought and dynamic changes within the wetlands of the Coteau creates highly productive habitat for breeding waterfowl. Attractive to breeding mallards, gadwall, Blue wing teal and northern shoveler, the Coteau also supports some of the highest breeding densities of pintails in the prairies.

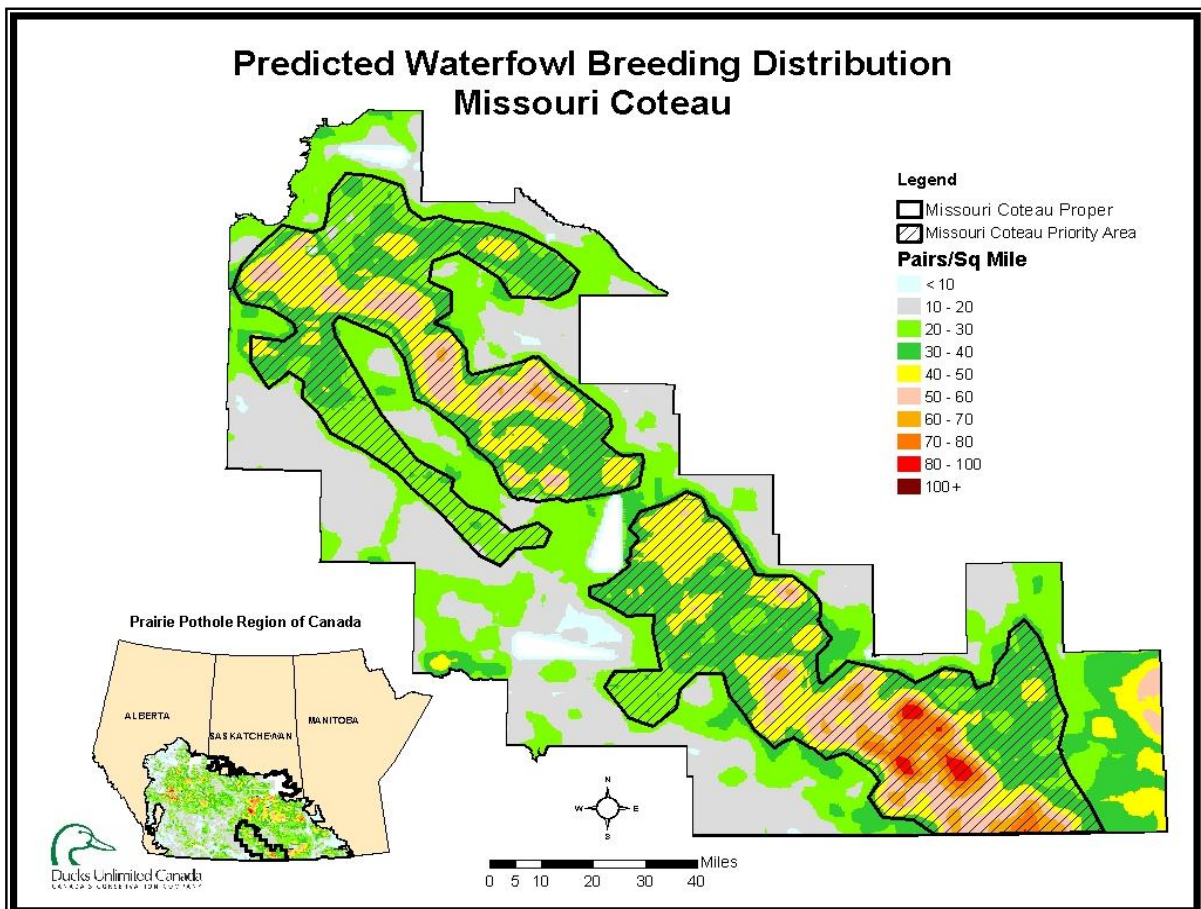


Figure 1. Predicted breeding waterfowl density and distribution within the Missouri Coteau. 3

Agriculture and Ag. Policy

FY 2006



AGRICULTURE

Opening of the US boarder to live Canadian beef resulted in an automatic response from the cattle markets and an increase in cattle prices. Although prices have not returned to pre-BSC levels the increase has resulted in a significant improvement for this industry. In response to the improved economics many producers are again converting annual cropped land to grass which will greatly benefit waterfowl across the Prairie Pothole Region.

Grain farming continues to struggle with increased input costs and low commodity prices. The time savings and agronomic benefits of winter wheat have proven to attract many producers over the past 10 years. Interest in winter cereals continues to grow and resulted in >750,000 acres seeded in the fall of 2005, the highest acre total since the 1980's. DUC is optimistic that growing interest among producers will result in 2006 seeded acreage reaching the 1 million acre mark for Prairie Canada this fall. Current research developments in winter hardiness and disease resistance are supported by DU and will continue to direct the future of this crop.

AG POLICY ADVANCEMENTS

New advancements in the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) include the acceptance of wetland restoration as an eligible activity within two Beneficial Management Practices (BMP); *Enhancing Wildlife Habitat and Biodiversity* and *Biodiversity Enhancement Planning*. The tremendous success of the Equivalent Agri-Environmental, or 'Group' Plans (a landscape approach) has led to the conversion of more than 40,000 acres of cropland to forage.

Although the final Greencover Canada forage conversion numbers are not yet known, as of March 31, 2006 applications have been received for over 308,000 acres of conversion. Greencover focuses on the conversion of physically marginal cropland converted to grass. Much of this has occurred in areas that will benefit waterfowl, especially northern pintails.

In March, the Government of Saskatchewan announced the Southern Conservation Lands Policy that enables conservation agencies to purchase land in the province within set guidelines. This policy allows DUC to continue to buy land in partnership with the province as well as on our own.



Waterfowl and Habitat: 2005 - 2006 Conditions



The Missouri Coteau is situated within the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Waterfowl Survey Stratum # 32.

The Province of Saskatchewan experienced above average spring pond conditions in 2005, due to a good fall frost seal and average snow accumulations. Provincially, pond numbers were 24 % above the long-term average with more than 2.4 million ponds. Spring pond numbers in Stratum 32 were 11.5% above the long-term average.

In early spring of 2005, stratum 32 attracted an estimated 2.8 million waterfowl. Fifteen species

of waterfowl were recorded on the May 2005 breeding survey of Stratum 32. A pilot year brood survey coordinated by Canadian Wildlife Service was conducted by a number of Canadian partners. Survey results indicated a strong breeding effort in the PPR of Canada.

In summary the 2005 waterfowl production year in the Missouri Coteau was characterized by above average spring pond conditions leading to slightly above average predicted production followed with late season drying conditions. This combination resulted in fair brood habitat and moderate soil moisture conditions going into the winter of 2005-06.



Cockburn Deferred Grazing Project: This DUC project is 4320 acres of which approximately 1,400 acres of native rangeland will have deferred grazing until July 1st every year.

Photo taken Sept 13, 2005

Program Highlights: “Conservation Easements and Winter Wheat”



Consistent with the three primary goals of the “**Coteau Legacy Conservation Plan**” (Protection, Improved Function and Compensation) as indicated in the FY2006 proposal to LDWF, conservation funding from states and other sources were pooled to provide maximum impact on the landscape.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

The FY 2006 target for conservation easements in the Missouri Coteau was the protection of 2500 acres of native uplands and wetlands. Due to an outstanding effort, 5417 acres were secured. The primary reason for this great success hinges on DUC’s many long and positive relationships with producers across the Coteau. It is trust in an organization like DUC that allows us to be so successful with conservation easements. With the strong partnership support of Sask Environment

(through the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund), DUC was able to secure matching funds for the conservation easement program.

WINTER WHEAT PROGRAMS

The growing success of winter wheat across western Canada including the Missouri Coteau is providing a much more attractive landscape for waterfowl. Based on nest densities at least 18 times higher than spring seeded crops, the 22,500 acres of winter wheat seeded in the Coteau would yield 320 hatched nests per year compared to only 16 hatched nests if it were still in spring crop. In the fall of 2005 over 350,000 acres of winter wheat was seeded in Saskatchewan which would provide habitat for upwards of 5,000 hatched nests. With some of the highest nest success of any cover type, this crop is likely to play a significant role in the sustainability of waterfowl and the long-term recovery of pintails.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS- FY06 (current year)

Goal	Acre Goals	Actual Acres	Cost-CDN \$,000	% Accomplished
Protection	81,500	61,091	1,136	75%
Improved Ecological Function	222,000	263,214	387	119%
Compensation	18,500	33,252	501	180%
TOTAL	322,000	357,557	\$2,024	111%

Program Accomplishments: FY 2006



“Coteau Legacy Plan” FY06 Accomplishments

Conservation Goals/Programs	Direct Program (Acres) ¹	Extension Program (Acres) ²	FY06 Total (Acres)	FY06 Total Cost
Protection of Existing Habitat				
Land Purchase	289.5	-	289.5	
Conservation Easements	5143.1	-	5143.1	
Tax Credit Program	-	52,983	52,983	
Conservation Agmt	2675.4	-	2675.4	
Habitat Management ⁴	-	-	426,283 ⁴	
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>8108</i>	<i>52,983</i>	<i>61,091</i>	<i>1,136,193</i>
Improved Ecological Function				
Grazing Extension ³	-	258,470 ³	258,470	
Stock Watering Development	1850	-	1850	
Grazing Agreements	2894	-	2894	
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>4744</i>	<i>258,470</i>	<i>263,214</i>	<i>387,244</i>
Compensate for Lost Habitats				
Conservation Forages	7341	-	7341	
Winter Cereals	7911	18,000	25,911	
Planted Cover	-	-	1059	
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>15,252</i>	<i>18,000</i>	<i>33,252</i>	<i>500,851</i>
Total	28,104	329,453	357,557	\$2,024,280

¹ Direct program – Programs whereby DUC directly impacts actions of producers, improves, or protects habitat.

² Extension program – Programs whereby DUC extends technical advice mutually beneficial to producers and waterfowl habitat.

³ Acres based on entire holdings of producers involved in extension activities. Represents the maximum potential impact on the landscape for the fiscal year.

⁴ Habitat Management - These acres include the existing projects requiring annual management to maintain healthy habitats. The acres in this category are not include in the total of habitat accomplishments.

Program Accomplishments: ...continued



The growth of waterfowl populations wintering in Louisiana hinges greatly on the productivity of the Canadian breeding grounds. The Prairie-Western Boreal Region (PWBR) of DUC is operating on a clear set of goals to protect and restore waterfowl habitat. The PWBR attracts greater than 70% of North America's breeding waterfowl. The Missouri Coteau contributes a high proportion of this production. The outstanding efforts of DUC conservation staff in the Missouri Coteau have resulted in 78% of the 5 year goals being accomplished after only 3 years.

Progress Toward 5-Year Goals

Program	5-Year Goal	3 yr Total	% Accomplished
Paid Perpetual Easements	10,910	13,707	126%
Tax Credit Program	249,767	240,673	96%
Land Purchase	1,760	289.5	16%
Grazing Extension	1,049,000	748,250	71%
Stock Watering	-	1850	
Grazing Agreements	10,000	11,754	118%
Government Pastures	66,825	65,428	98%
Conservation Forages	32,330	9,539	30%
Winter Cereals	44,700	46,961	105%
TOTAL	1,465,292	1,138,452	78%

LDWF's significant contributions to DU in partnership with others have contributed to the securement (minimum 10 year agreement) of 102,568 acres of habitat over the past 3 years. These accomplishments provide habitat capable of supporting 66,800 breeding pairs of ducks over the next 10 years. The impact is even greater through influence on the management and stewardship of an additional 1,035,884 acres of habitat.